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SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT HASHIMI WELCOMES PRESIDENT BUSH'S
LETTER, DISCUSSES NEW "SOCIAL CONTRACT"

REF: WHITE HOUSE 303 (NOTAL)

Classified by Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During a September 19 meeting with Vice President Tariq Al Hashimi, Embassy Political Counselor and poloffs delivered reftel letter from President Bush, emphasizing the USG commitment to progress on benchmark legislation and to an enduring bilateral relationship with the government and people of Iraq. Hashimi used the opportunity to question PM Maliki's true commitment to reconciliation, specifically on the issue of concerned local citizen (CLC) programs which have produced rapid results in defending neighborhoods from violent extremist groups and partisan militias. Citing a lack of national leadership, he said he produced a new "Social Contract" with which to address the "broken government" of PM Maliki, a draft of which is ready for sharing with other political groups pending a response from President Talabani.

¶2. (C) Responding to PolCouns' admonition to keep any new political initiative within the framework of the leadership process, Hashimi accused the PM of "doing whatever he likes," citing what he said were the "unbelievable" decisions to remove Tawafuq staff from the Commission on Public Integrity and to name its new Chief of Staff (both without consultation). Hashimi asked that the Embassy do more than simply report "more of Hashimi's complaints," and instead draw attention to the more important issue of Maliki "breaking his promises" on collective leadership. "What would you do if you were in my shoes," he questioned rhetorically, "in a one-man government, where agreements are meaningless, and where there is no teamwork spirit?" On the issue of draft de-baathification and provincial powers laws, Hashimi confirmed agreement on the former, and the need for significant additional work on the latter.

¶3. (C) Turning to his "social contract" idea, Hashimi said his paper would identify a list of principles, along with a pair of options for their implementation: early national elections, or resignation and reorganization of the current government. Early elections, he explained (seemingly his own preference), would require significant changes to the election law. If time did not permit, he continued, the second path - reorganization of the current government - can be managed according to the principles of his contract. An independent monitoring system ("perhaps the UN") would be required to maintain integrity of the process. Responding to PolCouns' view that this was the responsibility of the Parliament, Hashimi noted the institution's "weakness" and "incompetence." Furthermore, he added, the Council of Representatives is frozen on the issue of a vote of no confidence in Maliki, citing the COR's own "lack of confidence."

Comment

14. (S/NF) Hashimi recognizes our commitment to the leadership process and continues to play his part, along with his Deputy Ayad Samaraie, even though he sees the process as having failed. He appears to feel that he has become a voice in the wilderness at risk of being dismissed as a chronic complainer. While he awaits the perfect conditions for an effort to oust Maliki, he uses detainee releases and tribal engagements as a vehicle by which to gather strength and curry favor among the Sunni populace. As a case in point, as we arrived at his office, a group of five CLC leaders from the Ghazaliya and Saidiya neighborhoods of Baghdad were just departing, each carrying a gift from Hashimi -- a new pistol and envelopes overheard to contain USD one thousand. Similar gifts were given by Hashimi to groups of detainees recently released by the Coalition as part of its Ramadan release efforts. End comment.
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